

Employer Support for Grandparents: **Time to Care**



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Did you know that grandparents make up a significant portion of the American workforce?

There are an estimated 70-80 million grandparents in the United States—and those numbers will increase as baby boomers age. An AARP Grandparent Study found that over 40 percent of grandparents are currently employed full time or part time—an estimated **28-32 million working grandparents in the U.S.**¹

- Twenty-one percent are employed full time (never retired).
- Eight percent are retired, but working part time.
- Five percent are self-employed.
- Four percent are employed part time (never retired).
- Three percent are retired, but working full time.

Grandparents can be great workers—experienced and dedicated. Having grandparents work or volunteer in your place of business can attract other grandparent consumers too. Sometimes customers want help from someone who they can identify with and who understands their perspectives.

Grandparent Caregivers

Grandparents have always played an important role in the lives of families, but increasingly grandparents are taking on essential caregiving responsibilities for their grandchildren—some on a part-time basis; others have the challenge of raising their grandchildren full time. Grandparents are the American family's "safety net." But along with the joys of grandparenting, grandparent caregivers may experience many challenges. Many of these grandparent caregivers need and want to work. The national economy and the American family both pay a steep price when grandparent employees don't have the support they need to care for grandchildren and remain in the workforce.

- The average age of a first-time grandparent is 48.²
- The average American grandparent has 6 grandchildren.³
- Fifteen percent of grandparents provide child day care for grandchildren while their parents work.⁴

- Grandparents are the largest providers of child care for pre-schoolers while their mothers are working.⁵
- 2.4 million grandparents are responsible for the basic needs of grandchildren who live with them.⁶ Half of these grandparents are employed on a full-time or part-time basis.⁷

Whether grandparents are providing full-day child care, before/after school care, care during school holidays and summer breaks, or serving as the primary caregiver or guardian of their grandchildren, they can face challenges balancing work and family life responsibilities. Many grandparent caregivers may also have eldercare responsibilities for a spouse or older parent on top of caring for grandchildren.

For business, it pays for employers to support grandparent employees who care for grandchildren. With adequate work-life balance and flexibility practices, companies can recruit and retain grandparent workers; the bottom line is increased productivity and profits.

The AARP Foundation Helps Businesses Support Grandparent Caregivers When It's Time to Care

To support families and businesses, the AARP Foundation Grandparenting Program offers Time to Care, an easy to use, comprehensive portfolio of resources designed to help workers plan and find the supports they need in their communities. By giving grandparent employees Time to Care resources, businesses will:

- Help your employees plan and put into action a strategy for balancing work and caregiving responsibilities for grandchildren.
- Support your employees by directing them to local community resources.
- Improve your work/life/family balance offerings for employees.

The Bottomline for Businesses

By providing supports, resources, workplace flexibility and appropriate benefits for grandparent employees, businesses can:

Save Money and Reduce Lost Productivity

- Without adequate community and employer-based supports, working grandparent caregivers, like working parents, can have higher rates of absenteeism due to unexpected circumstances such as illness or vacation.

- A Families and Work Institute report, *Workplace Flexibility: A Guide for Companies*, reports that “A survey by CCH Inc., a provider of human resources and employment law information, revealed the hidden costs of unscheduled absences, which is about \$1.5 million for large companies. They also found that instead of illness, family issues are now the most often cited reason for taking time off. Other non-sickness reasons cited are stress and personal demands.”⁸
- Caring for grandchildren while working can be very stressful. This can cause health problems and lack of focus or commitment, resulting in decreased productivity. Having adequate financial and health supports can make all the difference for grandparent caregivers.



Increase Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Workers

- Grandparent caregivers often need flexible work schedules due to unexpected child care issues. A recent report found that management’s recognition of the importance of an employee’s personal and family life is the most significant drive for employee commitment. More specifically, the report found that “the benefits accrued from [a] commitment to helping employees deal with work/family issues improved recruitment and retention, improved morale, reduced stress and helps keep companies competitive.”⁹
- In a 1998 Watson Wyatt survey of 614 companies, flexibility was ranked by half of the companies as their most effective retention tool, better than above-market salaries, stock options or training.¹⁰

Decrease Financial Hardships for Employees

- For grandparents who step in to raise grandchildren full time, financial security is often threatened. Retirement planning and budgets go out the window, and a major financial crisis can ensue. Helping them find public benefits for their grandchildren and/or for themselves to supplement their income can make it possible for employees to keep working and lower stress caused by financial

worries. Many grandchildren are also eligible for public benefits based on their income—not on their grandparents' income; most grandparents don't know this.

- Finding affordable, quality child care is very difficult in America. For grandparents raising grandchildren full time, employer-based or subsidized child care can make it possible for them to keep working.
- Grandparents who provide part-time care for grandchildren may also need to channel larger parts of their income toward supporting their grandchildren. Fifty-two percent of grandparents spend money to help with a grandchild's educational expenses, 45 percent to help with basic living expenses, and 25 percent to help with medical/dental expenses. These are substantial contributions and can be a drain on grandparents' income.

The Grandparenting Program

The AARP Foundation Grandparenting Program strives to ensure that grandparents and grandchildren have access to resources that strengthen their health, finances and family connections. In addition to our Time to Care initiative, our current initiatives include:

- Benefits Outreach for Grandfamilies—connecting grandparent- and other relative-headed families to public benefits.
- WorkSearch for Grandfamilies—helping grandfamily members find jobs by providing an online interests/skills screening tool and job search service with an online training/certificate component.
- Financial Health—helping grandparents support their family's financial health through financial education about how to earn, spend, save, invest and protect their money.

Free Grandparenting Resource Materials

To order Time to Care, or any of our other free Grandparenting resource materials:

- Visit our website at www.aarp.org/grandparents for a list of currently available materials, including a free newsletter for grandparents in English and Spanish, and to order materials online.
- Email us at gic@aarp.org.
- Call toll-free, 1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277).

¹ AARP Grandparent Survey 2002.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ U.S. Census, 1997.

⁶ U.S. Census, 2000

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dana E. Friedman, "Workplace Flexibility: A Guide for Companies", Work Family Institute, When Work Works Project

⁹ Margaret B. Neal, Leslie B. Hammer, *Supporting Employees with Child and Elder Care Needs*, Portland State University (Portland: June 2001)

¹⁰ Dana E. Friedman, "Workplace Flexibility: A Guide for Companies", Work Family Institute, When Work Works Project

The AARP Foundation is AARP's affiliated charity. Foundation programs provide security, protection and empowerment for older persons in need. Low-income older workers receive the job training and placement they need to re-join the workforce. Free tax preparation is provided for low- and moderate-income individuals, with special attention to those 60 and older. The Foundation's litigation staff protects the legal rights of older Americans in critical health, long-term care, consumer and employment situations. Additional programs provide information, education and services to ensure that people over 50 lead lives of independence, dignity and purpose. Foundation programs are funded by grants, tax-deductible contributions and AARP.